

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

AID-05 ARAE-00 /060 W

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P 261852Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8486

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PINS GJ

SUBJ: GRENADA'S PUBLIC ORDER ACT AMENDED

REF: (A) BTN 0012 (B) BTN 0102 (C) BTN 0117

1. ACCORDING TO LOCAL NEWS REPORTS, ON FEB. 25 THE GRENADIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES PASSED AND SENT TO THE SENATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT WHICH RESTRICTS THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS TO HOLD PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS OR MARCHES. THE AMENDMENT REQUIRES DEMONSTRATORS TO GIVE POLICE THREE DAYS ADVANCE NOTICE TO HOLD A DEMONSTRATION AND, IF THEY PLAN TO USE LOUDSPEAKERS, DEMONSTRATORS MUST SUBMIT IN ADVANCE WHAT THEY INTEND TO SAY. THE POLICE MUST ALSO BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF THE ROUTES DEMONSTRATORS PLAN TO USE. POLICE COULD REFUSE PERSONS THE RIGHT TO MARCH OR DEMONSTRATE. FINANCE MINISTER GEORGE HOSTEN, LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE, SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOG RECOGNIZES THE RIGHT OF PERSONS TO HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS, IT WOULD INSIST THAT THEY CONFORM TO THE LAW. HE SAID "THE AMENDMENT WAS NECESSARY TO PREVENT INDISCRIMINATE USE OF LOUDSPEAKERS WHICH COULD BE A TERRIBLE NUISANCE TO CITIZENS OF THE STATE." PRIME MINISTER ERIC M. GAIRY SAID THAT "THE AMENDMENT WAS NOT INTENDED TO BE REPRESSIVE AND THAT GRENADIANS WERE ABLE TO SAY AND WRITE LOTS OF THINGS WHICH WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED IN OTHER COUNTRIES." A MOTION BY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION HERBERT A. BLAIZE TO GIVE THOSE PERSONS

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REFUSED PERMISSION BY THE POLICE TO HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS THE

RIGHT TO APPEAL WAS DEFEATED. THE AMENDMENT, WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN DEBATED IN THE SENATE, IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO PASS AND, IN ANY CASE, COULD BECOME LAW BY PASSAGE IN THE HOUSE A SECOND TIME.

2. ON JANUARY 11, THREE MEMBERS OF THE LEFTIST NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT WERE ARRESTED AND HELD WITHOUT BAIL ON CHARGES OF USING LOUDSPEAKERS WITHOUT POLICE PERMISSION. SIMON DANIEL, DIAN JOSEPH, AND ALISON THOMAS WERE PUBLICIZING A FUTURE NJM MEETING WHEN THEY WERE ARRESTED BY POLICE. THE THREE NJM MEMBERS WERE RELEASED ON BAIL SEVERAL DAYS LATER.

3. COMMENT: SINCE THE NJM IS THE ONLY POLITICAL GROUP IN GRENADA ACTIVELY HOLDING PUBLIC MEETINGS, THE AMENDMENT TO THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT IS OBVIOUSLY AIMED AT HAMPERING ITS ACTIVITIES. THE NJM, ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE GRENADIAN SOURCE, HAS SUBMITTED SEVERAL APPLICATIONS TO THE POLICE TO USE LOUDSPEAKERS BUT THE POLICE ARE SIMPLY NOT ACTING ON THE APPLICATIONS.

THE GAIRY GOVERNMENT COULD ALSO BE AMENDING THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT IN ANTICIPATION OF DEMONSTRATIONS BY THE NJM FOLLOWING THE ISSUANCE OF THE DUFFUS COMMISSION REPORT ON ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY AND THE BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER IN GRENADA BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1, 1973 AND MARCH 1, 1974. IT IS WELL KNOWN IN GRENADA THAT THE NJM PLANS TO HOLD DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTEST MARCHES, IF THE GAIRY GOVERNMENT, AS EXPECTED, FAILS TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE DUFFUS REPORT. THE SECRETARY OF THE DUFFUS COMMISSION WAS IN GRENADA OVER THE LAST WEEKEND AND RETURNED TO JAMAICA ON FEB. 25. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE DUFFUS REPORT WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE GOG THIS COMING WEEKEND. THERE COULD BE VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN THE GAIRY REGIME AND ITS NJM OPPONENTS AS EARLY AS THE MIDDLE OF MARCH.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, LAW, AMENDMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BRIDGE00318
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750068-0122
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750212/aaaaakna.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BTN 0012, 75 BTN 0102, 75 BTN 0117
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GRENADA'S PUBLIC ORDER ACT AMENDED
TAGS: PINT, PINS, GJ, (GAIRY, ERIC M)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006